

The Passing Throng - - The House Behind the Cedars.

BY BRUCE GRIT.

Under the American sovereignty the Negro no matter what his complexion, culture or wealth, will always be a social pariah—and outcast. The race prejudice which the white man has inherited to a degree of intensity which few of them realize will have a profound influence upon the problems now awaiting solution in Cuba, Porto Rico, the Philippines and the United States, a task for which Americans have not shown the least aptitude or the least likelihood of performing creditably, either at home or abroad. Their national capacities do not lie in this direction, the circumstances of their national development have directly militated against their properly fulfilling such a role. Mr. Wu the Chinese Ambassador in an address in New York City recently speaking of racial prejudice said: "Racial prejudice and religious intolerance are the two monsters of barbarism. In the former days they seemed to stalk hand in hand. They set nation against nation, people against people. Oh, what a destruction of life and property there was on account of race and religious prejudices. What good came from the crusades, or the thirty years war, not any; they only inflicted trouble on christian and Mohammedan alike. The most striking religious persecution were those of the Huguenots in France and the expulsion of the Moors from Spain. After the edict of Nantes 500 000 inhabitants of France sought refuge elsewhere and the commercial condition of the country was impaired. When the Moors were expelled from Spain that country lost its best agriculturists. * * * Some people have antipathy for snakes, they consider all snakes venomous. The naturalist acts differently. He goes to the haunts of the snakes and studies their habits. He finds that a few are venomous, but that the greater number harmless. If he can overcome the prejudice as to snakes, there is no reason why we cannot overcome the prejudice of race or religion. We can do so by acquainting ourselves with the language and customs of other people. Then our feelings will be correctly modified."

This is pointed and sensible and coming as it does from the representative of a race which Americans have been wont to look down on as "heathens and barbarians" shows that these alleged "heathen and barbarians" possess more of the spirit of humanity and true brotherhood than the boasted Christians of the Western World.

Caste is an arbitrary division of society into classes which may not mingle on terms of equality, in the common intercourse of life. It differs from the distinction created by wealth, refinement and education by being unsurpassable. Its barrier separates between individuals who are in all important respects, mental and corporeal on an absolute level. It even consigns to a fictitious inferiority individuals who every way superior. Caste is a foe to human happiness, producing oppression, jealousy, revenge and settled hate and obstructing the progress of the gospel of peace. The following story told of the late Robert Purvis, will illustrate the shallowness of the American caste spirit. Our friend Mr.

Robert Purvis a colored gentleman of Philadelphia was about to embark for Europe in one of the packets when a Mr.—— a first class aristocrat learning that a colored man was to be a passenger objected to going in the cabin with him. The captain in the true dough face style refused Mr. Purvis and he was obliged to embark for New York. In Europe he was of course treated with as much courtesy as if he had been entirely white, and perhaps a little more. But as he stepped into a shallow at Portsmouth to go on board the packet which was to bring him back to America whom should he meet but the very Mr.—— who objected to his company from Philadelphia! But as Mr.—— did not know him, and color was not a matter to be so nicely studied at the end of the voyage, no objections were started. The company on board was of the very elite of the American white aristocracy; a brother of Gov. Hayne of South Carolina for one by whom Mr. Purvis was politely received and to whom during the voyage for the furtherance of the joke he endeavored and with great success to render himself agreeable. He daily walked arm in arm with some of the gentlemen on deck, and was upbraided by fathers and mothers if he neglected to dance with their daughters! On arriving at Sandy Hook, the captain gave a special entertainment, when after other toasts the health of Mr. Purvis was proposed ALL STANDING. The mother of one of the young ladies, it is true, was once on the voyage a little inquisitive "were you born in Philadelphia Mr. Purvis," said she, "No Madam" he replied, "I was born far South." "I thought as much" the lady rejoined, "for that climate will injure the most delicate complexion." Now ought not these, all of them, to be brought before the Supreme Court of Connecticut sitting at Canterbury and tried for not having better discrimination?

This story illustrates the silliness and sham of color prejudice.

The "House Behind the Cedars" is a story charmingly told, and in Mr. Chesnut's happiest and best vein and in it he shows us that the optical obfuscation of the exclusive white brother has undergone little if any change. The heroine of the story Rowena Warwick, a pretty mulatto, whose brother, John, who has passed over on to the other side, has become a famous lawyer in South Carolina and a member of the ultra fashionable set in his city—is persuaded by him to leave her black mammy in Patesville, N. C. and the little house behind the Cedars and go to live with him now that he is a widower—in his palatial home in Clarence, S. C. The girl is at first somewhat reluctant, though deep down in her heart there is a feeling, desire, for a change of environment but she loves her black mammy devotedly and hesitates to make answer until the matter has first been considered by her mother. Her brother at an opportune moment explains to his mother the great advantages that will come to Rowena by a change of residence, he promises to send her to school and have the rough edges taken off of her and to make her his housekeeper, mistress of

his house, where she will be thrown among the best people of his set and where she will, with her natural beauty and grace of manner, undoubtedly succeed in finding a husband. The picture he paints to his mother is most beautiful and realizing that Rowena's future is so big with promise Mrs. Molly gives her consent in tremulous voice—the while thinking of another sacrifice made years before, when she gave up John who went out into the world, made a name and a fortune, married a white woman and by some strange legerdemain was himself metamorphosed into a fine white gentleman as far as appearances go. Naturally ambitious for her daughter and persuaded that since John succeeded so well that Rowena could also. She accepted the will of fate though not without misgivings as to the result and bid Rowena prepare for the journey. Soon after having been installed as mistress in her brother's house where she was a general favorite of the servants and her little nephew, her brother's only child. The annual tournament of the Clarence Social Club was about to begin and so



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ciety was all in a flutter over the forthcoming event which was to take place at the County Fair ground. The youth and beauty of Clarence looked forward to the coming tournament with keen interest and the best riders of the neighborhood and adjoining counties were preparing to try conclusions with each other and the place of honor in the heart of the queen of love and beauty whoever she was to be.

Rowena and her brother occupied seats on the grand stand when the gallant Knights arrayed in their handsome suits of armor, passed in review, on their gayly caparisoned chargers to receive the smiles of fair ladies, preparatory to entering the lists for the prize. It happened—so the story goes—that Rowena, while admiring the splendid horsemanship of the riders, accidentally dropped her dainty handkerchief over the rail, a young rider in the approaching rear ranks saw it fall and darting swiftly forward caught it on the point of his lance ere it touched the ground. He drew up his horse and made a movement as though to extend the handkerchief toward the lady who was blushing profusely at the attention she had attracted by her carelessness. The rider hesitated a moment, glanced at Warwick, and receiving a smile in return, tied the handkerchief around the middle of his lance and quickly rejoined his comrades at the head of the lists. The rest is soon told. George Tyron (for that is the name of the gallant Knight) is a North Carolinian, a client of John Warwick's and his personal friend. In the contest for the championship he was the winner, and like a true Knight of old ascribed his success to the magic of the handkerchief of the then to him unknown lady.

When the judges had rendered their decision he sought the lady and was introduced to her by his friend John Warwick and was of course agreeably surprised to learn that the lady was John's sister. He chose her as the Queen of Love and Beauty—And at the ball which followed she shared with him the honors of his victory as becomes a Queen of Love and Beauty—She bore herself with such easy grace and queenly dignity that her brother John was particularly proud of her and her gallant Knight Sir George Tyron was the proudest, luckiest, happiest man in all the town of Clarence. Having danced with his fair Queen several times and while waiting between sets, he said "I trust your gracious Majesty is pleased with the homage of devoted subjects" (keeping up the character of Knight in his speech and manner). She assured him that she was, and his royal heart seemed to beat faster, he was delighted. Tyron was quite a young man, not more than twenty-three, had considerable property, much of which was in litigation and was being straightened out by John Warwick. He was a frequent visitor at John's house after meeting Rowena between whom and himself there sprang up a friendship which ripened into the most passionate love—at least on one side. The sequel was the engagement of the happy pair. By a peculiar chain of circumstances the engagement was never fulfilled.

Tyron was called away on business in a neighboring city which would keep him two or three weeks. He loved Rowena so ardently that before leaving he exacted that she write him every day while he was absent from her side. Soon after he had left the city Rowena received a letter from her mother telling her of her illness which proved to be the fulfillment of a dream she had had three times in succession. This letter so impressed her that she made ready to leave at once for Patesville. She did not, however, tell her dear George whither she had gone she merely advised him that the illness of a dear friend had called her from the city and that she would probably be back before his return to Clarence. In the meantime George was so eager to get married that he had compromised his law suit for two or three hundred dollars less in order to return to Patesville earlier than he had originally anticipated doing. Imagine his surprise on arriving to find that the bird had flown. The letter sent him had not reached him but was returned to Clarence where he found it awaiting him. The suspense added to the delay and disappointment was terrible. Remembering that he had some property interests in Patesville and some distant relatives living there he decided to kill time and dispatch some business as well while waiting Rowena's return. Now Patesville is a small town and in small towns every body knows every body and a few in the adjoining towns. Mrs. Molly Walden, John and Rowena's mother, was known to the white people of note in Patesville; they knew her history, or at least part of it. The doctor who attended Mrs. Molly was a relative of George Tyron and while he of course knew that Mrs. Molly was colored did not know that her daughter was passing for white in Clarence and engaged to marry his relative. Neither did Rowena know that her George was in the village—in fact neither knew that the other was anywhere around. One day while he was sitting in the doctor's buggy before a drug store the doctor having previously told him about the beautiful and fascinating Octroon, he saw her emerge from the